

News Release

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Broken Umbrellas Reborn as Fashion Thanks to Small Business Owner

Brooklyn, NY– Yes, it's true. Strange as it may sound, you can now wear and elegantly carry those busted-up umbrellas you see blowing down the street and deposited in trashcans on rainy, windswept days. You will also be doing your part for the environment by recycling what was once considered trash, thanks to Brooklyn-based, HIMANE, Inc.

Designer, seamstress, patternmaker and HIMANE owner, Catherine Edouard-Charlot, scours the neighborhood for those castaway umbrellas and recreates them as '60's vintage eveningwear, jackets and handbags among other items. Those reconstructed products are the start of her emerging earth-conscious line of clothing which includes recycled shirts, jackets and pants. She also produces fashion items from more traditional fabrics like cotton and silk.

Originally a clothing designer and business owner in Haiti, Edouard-Charlot was experiencing a little success with clients from afar as The Netherlands. She emigrated to the U.S. when she was 28 years old and undertook studies at the Fashion Institute of Technology to complement her degree from Haiti's Verona Alta Costura School of Fashion. She then started a home-based business producing custom-designed wedding dresses, and doctors and nurses scrubs, in addition to pattern- and sample-making services. But she never seemed to be able to grow the business beyond her one-person operation.

That was until she visited the Women's Business Center of Brooklyn's Business Outreach Center Network. The WBC, funded by the U.S. Small Business Administration, provides free business counseling to nascent and existing entrepreneurs. In Edouard-Charlot case, the WBC's Liliana Blanco helped her commit both a business plan and marketing plan to paper. "Those are the plans I needed to strategize the growth of my business," said Edouard-Charlot. "I can't even find the words to describe how much Liliana and the other WBC counselors helped me."

Working from her business plan, Edouard-Charlot moved the business from her apartment into a more convenient space in downtown Brooklyn, so that she can fill larger orders.

As her business continues to grow, Edouard-Charlot looks forward to the day when she can start her care center for young ladies. "I see these young girls hanging out on the streets after school

and it breaks my heart. I would like to create a center where these young girls will come after school and learn a trade such as sewing, crocheting, pattern-making or even candle making.”

Edouard-Charlot named her business, HIMANE (pronounced ee-mann), after her late mother. Himane means “believe in” and “faith.” The only question remaining to this story is, ‘who will be the first celebrity believing in, and decked-out in, that four-dollar umbrella you tossed away?’

HIMANE can be found online at www.himane.com.

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